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HISTORY
—OF—
ELI LEWIS and FAMILY

Given in a Speech by Ellis S. Lewis, at Lewisberry
Home-Coming Service

TELLS OF WELSH RACE

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ELLEN and FAMILY

(From the records of the
Census Bureau)

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Below is printed the address made by Ellis S. Lewis, president of the York Trust Company, who is a great-great grandson of the founder of Lewisberry, at the second annual "Home-Coming Day" of the town, yesterday. The speech is a concise history of the Lewis family, after whom the town was named.

2023778

I have been requested to prepare a paper on the history of the Lewis family, which settled in Red Land valley and one of whose descendants laid out and founded the town of Lewisberry in 1798.

In the year 1690, because of a dispute in reference to a division of the Welsh Barony in Chester county, a number of the Welsh settlers of Radnor and Haverford addressed the authorities partly in these words:

"We being descendants of the ancient Britons who always in the land of our nativity, under the Crown of England, have enjoyed that liberty and privilege as to have our bounds and limits by ourselves, within which all causes, quarrels, crimes and titles were tried and wholly determined by officers, magistrates and jurors of our own language, which were our equals. Having our faces towards these counties, made motion to our governor that we might enjoy the same here—to the intent we might live together here, and enjoy our liberty and devotion, which thing was granted us before we came to these parts."

So far as is known, this was the first trumpet note that appealed for civil liberty in the plantations of America, and it is well to remember that it was sounded by Welshmen, not in New England, not in New York, not in the South, but by the inhabitants of Haverford and Radnor, in the County of Chester, Pennsylvania.

Boasted of Race

The very difference in the wording of this petition from that of similar papers of the day drawn up by other settlers, makes us pause to ask who were these men who boasted their descent from a half forgotten race; who prized so highly both civil and religious liberty; whose words rang out so defiantly to the officers of the province?

When Caesar formed on the sands of Romney, the legions of brass and leather that had overtoppled kingdoms, he found opposed to his forces a brave and intelligent people.

The religion of the Britons even at that time was superior to that of other nations.

The above is quoted from an address by Thomas Allen Glenn, made

before the Chester County Historical society on February 17, 1898, and will explain to a great extent the reason for the migration of the Welsh Quakers to America in 1682 and thereafter, and their further migration from Chester county as those of other races encroached upon their settlements.

You may search the records of the entire list of American Colonies, but you will not find in any of them any community equal in intelligence and industry to that of the Welsh settlers of Chester county.

The emigration of the Welsh Quakers to the County of Chester, as stated, commenced in 1682 and continued until about 1700-1710. One of the last to arrive was Ellis Lewis.

Migrated to America in 1708

Ellis Lewis, the ancestor of the Lewis family in which we are interested, was born in Merionithshire, Wales, about 1680, his father dying while he was quite young, his mother remarrying. In or about 1698 the family prepared to embark for America, but were prevented by illness, their household goods, however, going on. Later they went to Ireland and thence to Pennsylvania, Ellis Lewis' certificate of removal being dated at Mount Mellick, Ireland, the 25th day of the 5th month, 1708.

In the certificate referred to, mention was made of certain "substance" or property belonging to him in Pennsylvania, and his "relations" already in the Province, were also referred to.

Upon his arrival in Pennsylvania, Ellis Lewis went first to Haverford, in the neighborhood of his relatives; subsequently, he settled in Kennett township, Chester County, said province, where he was highly esteemed, being "a man of good understanding," long an Elder of Friends, and an active participant in the religious and material affairs of that dominating organization. The residence built by Ellis Lewis in 1727, near Kennett Square, was the house in which the plot was laid of Bayard Taylor's book, entitled "The Story of Kennett."

He was twice married—first, on April 13th, 1713, at Concord Meeting, in Chester county, to Elizabeth Newlin, the mother of his children; secondly, to Mary Baldwin, a widow, in

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1723, at Falls Meeting, Bucks county, who survived him.

He died at Wilmington, Delaware, on the 31st of the 6th month, 1750, and was buried at Kennett.

Record of Legacy

His will, made the 25th day of the 12th month, 1747-8, was proved on the 29th of October, 1750, and is of record at Wilmington. In it he gives a legacy of 50 pounds Pennsylvania currency to his widow, Mary Lewis, together with an annuity of 8 pounds a legacy of 60 pounds to his son Nathaniel; one of 20 pounds to a younger son, Ellis, and one of 150 pounds to his only daughter, Mary, the wife of Joshua Pusey. Several other bequests are made, and then the testator directs that the residue of his estate, including household goods and books, be equally divided among his four children, the three already mentioned and an elder son, Robert.

To return to his first wife; she was the daughter of Nathaniel Newlin, the owner and settler of Newlin township, Chester county, member of the Provincial Assembly in 1698; in 1700 one of the committee on the revision of the laws and government of Pennsylvania, subsequently, a justice of the county courts, 1703, and, finally, 1726, one of the proprietary's commissioners of property, and from 1722 until his death in 1729, one of the trustees of the general loan office of the province. His first wife and the mother of Elizabeth was Mary Mendenhall of Mildenhall, County Wilts, England, whom he married April 17th, 1685.

Commission from Penn

The father of Nathaniel Newlin was Nicholas Newlin, an Englishman by birth, who came from Mt. Mellick, Queens County, Ireland, to Pennsylvania, 1683, settling in Coneord township, Chester county. In 1684 he was commissioned by Governor Penn, one of the justices of the courts of the said county; in the following year he was called to the council of the said governor and proprietary, William Penn, the Founder of Pennsylvania.

Nicholas Newlin died in May, 1699 and his wife, Elizabeth Paggot, in 1717.

Ellis Lewis was the father of four children, all by his first wife, as follows: Robert, born 1714; Mary, born 1716, married Joshua Pusey; Nathaniel, born 1717 (died without issue), and Ellis, born 22nd, 3rd month, 1719.

Descendants of Robert, the oldest son of Ellis Lewis, the emigrant from

Wales, became active factors in the literary, financial, professional and commercial life of Philadelphia. One of the descendants of this line was Edmund Darch Lewis, who attained a large measure of distinction as one of America's most famous landscape and marine painters, among the most noted of his paintings being his "Queen of the Antilles," "Valley of the Umri."

YORK COUNTIAN'S HISTORIES

We will treat only the line from the son, Ellis, who later settled in Red Land Valley, York county, and is the line from whom the family in York county is descended.

Ellis Lewis, born 1719, spent a large part of his youth in Kennett Square; not all, indeed, for he was of an adventurous spirit and required even more "worldly liberty" than one of his ancestors, and when only 17 or 18 years of age, made his first trip to lands West of the Susquehanna river.

He was married on the 25th, 2nd month, 1744; at Birmingham monthly meeting, to Ruth Wilson, daughter of John and Ruth Hind Wilson, who survived her husband, died between December 28, 1794, and February 16, 1795, the dates, respectively, of the execution and probate of his will in York county, Pennsylvania.

They had two sons: Ellis, who died before his father, leaving issue, and Eli, born January 31, 1750.

Owing to the frequency with which the name Ellis appears in the line, it is necessary to repeat the date of birth.

Ellis Born In 1719

Ellis, born 1719, settled in York county about 1744, having made various visits prior to that date, although he did not produce his certificate of removal from Kennett meeting until 1770, his wife, Ruth, having produced her certificate for herself and son Eli from Newark monthly meeting in 1760. A request had been made for a certificate for him to Warrington meeting prior to 1759, but as he had been too free with strong liquor, it was not granted at once. He made an acknowledgment for his weakness and a committee was appointed to inquire into his affairs and prepare a certificate. As he again gave way to temptation, no certificate was granted him, and after some years he was disowned. In 1770 he produced evidence of amendment and he was reinstated in membership and during the remainder of his life was held in high esteem.

He, with John Rankin and Joseph Bennett, was among the first settlers in the northern part of York county,

in what was known as Red Land Valley, near Lewisberry, Pa.

Overseer of Newberry Twp.

The minutes of Warrington monthly meeting under date of 1763, state that Ruth Lewis was appointed overseer of Newberry meeting, and was succeeded the following year by Sarah Miller. The minutes of the same meeting state that in 1779 Ellis Lewis and others were appointed trustees of Newberry school and land.

Ellis Lewis and his wife, Ruth Lewis, are both buried in the old Quaker graveyard at Newberrytown.

Eli Lewis, the founder of Lewisberry, Pa., the son of Ellis and Ruth Wilson Lewis, became a man of much prominence in Red Land valley. He was commissioned major of the first battalion, York county militia, October 1, 1777, and participated in the battles of Brandywine and Germantown.

In 1783 Major Eli Lewis was assessed for taxation purposes in Newberrytown township, for the ownership of 850 acres of land and 6 dwelling houses, and conducted a store.

In 1783 he was complained of by Newberry meeting for taking the test, neglecting meetings, "attending an election for the choice of military officers," setting up for a colonel among them; also "attending a muster," and in 1784 he was disowned—a fighting Quaker. He was reinstated in membership in 1805. In 1790, he with a man by the name of Prange were the publishers of the first newspaper printed in Harrisburg, Pa., entitled "The Harrisburg Monitor, and the Weekly Advertiser" (I own a copy of this paper, Vol. 1, No. 20, dated Tuesday, February 1, 1791.)

Eli of Literary Ability

Eli Lewis was a man of fair literary ability, and in 1792 wrote a poem of considerable merit, entitled "St. Clair's Defeat."

"Inspired by grief to tender friendship due,
The trembling hand unfolds the tale to view,
A tale which strongly claims the pitying tear,
And every feeling heart must bleed to hear."

In 1798 he laid out the town of Lewisberry, and was connected with many public enterprises, and attained such a degree of prominence as constituted him a leader in public movements in his section of Pennsylvania.

Lewisberry was incorporated April 2, 1832, and thus became the third borough in the county of York. It was the center of an intelligent Eng-

lish population, and was in the zenith of its prosperity between the year 1830-1845.

Eli Lewis was married at London-grove monthly meeting, Chester county, on November 10, 1779, to Pamela (born November 19, 1759, died Feb. 20, 1803), daughter of John and Jane Brinton Webster, and died February 1, 1807. Both Eli Lewis and his wife Pamela are buried in the Quaker graveyard at Newberrytown. They had children as follows: Webster, born Oct. 18, 1780; Eliza, born 1782, died 1830, married Robert Hamersley; Phebe, born 1784, died 1810, married a Mr. Liggitt; Pamela born 1787, married Joseph Lewis (no relative) and migrated to Ohio about 1830; Eli, born 1789, died 1867; James, born 1796, died 1845; Ellis, born 1798, died 1871 and several children who died in infancy.

Webster Lewis

Webster Lewis, the eldest son of Eli and Pamela Lewis, was born near what is now the town of Lewisberry, and died at New Cumberland, May 28, 1832, and is buried in Hecks graveyard, near Milltown, Cumberland county. He was a physician, and practiced his profession in the country surrounding Lewisberry. He led in the innovation of growing the poppy and making the opium used in his practice. To this calling he also added a knowledge and practice of law in the courts of York county, to which he was admitted in 1820.

He was married July 25, 1798, to Mary (born March 10, 1779, died Nov. 16, 1830) daughter of Dr. George and Ann Rankin Nebinger. Ann Rankin was a descendant of the John Rankin and Joseph Bennett referred to earlier in this sketch. Dr. George Nebinger was a surgeon with the Revolutionary army.

One a Merchant

Eli Lewis, the second son of Eli and Pamela Lewis, was also prominent in York County affairs. He was a merchant in York, and in Baltimore. From 1850-1852 he was president of the York & Cumberland R. R. Co., which extended from York to York Haven, and thence along the Susquehanna River to Lemoyne, and now a part of the Northern Central Railway company, and became a director of the Northern Central company upon the consolidation in December 1854 of the various roads into the Northern Central system. From 1853-1859 he was president of the York Savings bank, now the York County National bank, of York. From 1864, the date of incorporation, to 1867, the year of his death, he was president of the First National bank, of York.

He married (2nd wife) Rebecca Forney, and died May 4, 1867. Mrs. Rebecca L. Bonham, York, is one of his children.

James Lewis, the third son of Eli and Pamela Lewis, was like his father and brothers, one of the public spirited men of this section of the state, an Attorney-at-Law, having been admitted to the bar of York county in 1820, and among other posts of responsibility, was president of the York bank, now York National bank, from 1842 to 1845, the time of his death. He married Jane Barnitz, and died November 16, 1845. His only descendant is Grier Hersh, who has been prominent in the financial and commercial life of York, filling positions of responsibility in the public utility corporations of York, and has been president of the York National bank since 1895, save for a few years, when he filled the same office in the Maryland Trust company, of Baltimore, Md.

About Ellis Lewis

The youngest and the most distinguished of the four sons of Major Eli Lewis, in fact the most distinguished member of all the branches of the Lewis family, was Ellis Lewis.

When a lad of nine years his father died, but his brothers and sisters cared well for him and gave him a preliminary education.

Time does not permit me to do full justice to the life and achievements of Ellis Lewis, who in 1855 became chief justice of the supreme court of Pennsylvania.

In 1810, at the age of twelve, Ellis Lewis, (born 1798) was apprenticed to John Wyeth, publisher of the "Oracle of Dauphin," a newspaper of Harrisburg, Pa., for the term of seven years, in which Wyeth agreed to teach him "the art and mystery of a Printer," take care of him for seven years, and "give him during the said term three quarters of night schooling," and at the end, two suits of "apparel, one whereof to be new."

He served five years of his apprenticeship, when he betrayed signs of serious discontent.

Printer's "Devil"

In a letter to one of his brothers he stated that he was not at all reconciled with his situation; he wrote, "I like Wyeth well enough," but that he did not like certain members of the household. His dissatisfaction grew, and in February, 1816, he left Harrisburg.

Wyeth was in no mood to lose two years of his apprentice's services, and advertised for him as follows:

"Twenty Dollars Reward,

Oracle Office, Feb. 8, 1816.

Absconded from this office on Sunday morning last, an inden-

tured apprentice to the printing business named

Ellis Lewis

aged about 19 years, about 5 ft., 1 or 2 inches high, slim build, pale countenance, etc."

For over eight months no news was heard of the whereabouts of the young printer.

Assuming the name of Henry Van Ellenburg to elude the search of his employer, he wrote his brother Eli, giving his address in New York city, securing a position with the New York Courier and later with other New York papers. Later, his health being impaired, he gave up his position and in June, 1818, was in Frederick, Md., trying to make a deal for a plant for a newspaper and printing office in Westminster, Md. In the fall of the same year he was in Williamsport, Pa., negotiating for an interest in the "Advertiser," owned by a Mr. Simpson. Negotiations not proving satisfactory, he accepted employment on the "Lycoming Gazette," owned by a Mr. Torbett. In 1820 he purchased the paper, and seems to have been successful in his management of it. (I own a copy of this paper, dated August 2, 1820, and designated as New Series, Vol. II, No. 42). In 1821 he sold the paper and gave his entire time to the study of law, his preceptor being Epsy Van Horn, of Williamsport, Pa., and was at the age of twenty-four admitted to the bar of Lycoming county. In 1828 he was admitted to the bar of York county.

Becomes Attorney General

On November 21, 1822, he married Josephine Wallis and resided in Williamsport, Wellsboro and Towanda at various times. In 1824 he was appointed deputy attorney general for Lycoming county. About this time his bright prospects were suddenly and seriously threatened by the appearance of a disease of a bone in one of his legs, which caused great suffering, and for a while amputation seemed necessary, but his condition improved. Several years later the old trouble appeared, so the long trip from Wellsboro, Pa., to Lewisberry was made by carriage, and an operation was performed by his brother, Dr. Webster Lewis, with the assistance of another physician, and the diseased portion of the bone was removed. It was said to have been a delicate operation, but entirely successful and made without the use of an anesthetic. Dr. Webster Lewis in a letter to their brother Eli, stated that "Ellis never flinched in the slightest degree."

THE FIRST PART OF THE HISTORY OF THE
LIFE OF THE LATE KING OF GREAT BRITAIN

AND OF HIS REIGN
FROM HIS INFANCY TO HIS DEATH

IN TWO VOLUMES
THE SECOND VOLUME
CONTAINING THE HISTORY OF HIS REIGN
FROM HIS DEATH TO THE PRESENT TIME

BY SAMUEL JOHNSON
ESQ.
OF LONDON

LONDON: Printed by J. DODD, in Pall-mall; and by J. H. BARNES, in Strand, 1795.

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Goes to Legislature

Subsequently, he was elected a member of legislature from Bradford county, where he demonstrated the possession of such a vigorous intellect and such a varied acquaintance with legal principles that he attracted the attention of Governor Wolf, who, in 1833, appointed him attorney general of the state. Later, in the same year, upon the unanimous petition of the members of the bar of Lycoming county, he was named judge of the Eighth Judicial district for a period of ten years. Following this, he was appointed president judge of the second district, comprising Lancaster county. In 1851 he was elected to the supreme court of Pennsylvania, and in January, 1855, attained the chief justiceship. At the end of his term, he retired to private life, having declined a unanimous renomination to the position which he had adorned with such distinguished ability. Of Chief Justice Lewis a writer has said: "His judicial decisions displayed deep legal learning and the highest order of merit. The honorary degree of Doctor of Medicine was conferred upon him on account of his knowledge of medical jurisprudence and he received from two universities the degree of Doctor of Laws in merited recognition of the width and profundity of his legal learning. He was widely recognized as a ripe scholar, a deep thinker, and a public spirited and benevolent man, whose life reward was one to win encomiums from all who knew him, either personally or by reputation." He died in Philadelphia, Pa., March 19, 1871, leaving descendants.

Children of Webster Lewis

To return to Webster Lewis. He had children as follows: Robert Nebinger Lewis, born, 1799; George W., born, 1803; Rankin, born, 1804; Rebecca M., born, 1808; Eli, born, 1811; Andrew, born, 1813; James M., born, 1815. All but the first moved from York county.

Robert Nebinger Lewis was born July 30, 1799, in Lewisberry, and died March 16, 1846, and is buried in the Quaker graveyard between Newberry-

town and Lewisberry. He was a physician of great ability, and practiced for a time with his father at Lewisberry, but later, located at Dover, at which place he lived at the time of his death. He, with his father, Webster Lewis, was an active agent of the so-called "Underground Railroad," by which numerous slaves were aided on their way to Canada from Maryland and the South. Several attempts were made on his life by the slave hunters when they found themselves balked in their efforts to recover their escaping slaves.

He was married on March 28, 1822, to Mary, born February 28, 1801, died December 17, 1867, daughter of John and Sarah (Pugh) Moore.

Robert N. Lewis and his wife had four sons and three daughters, from whom are descended the members of the family living in York county at the present time, and who are active in the professional, financial, commercial and political life of the county.

Samuel S. Lewis

In closing this brief history of the family, I wish to call attention to its most distinguished living member, Samuel Smyser Lewis, at present, treasurer of the State of Pennsylvania, formerly auditor general of Pennsylvania, which office he so creditably filled.

Samuel S. Lewis was born in York, received a common school education, graduating from the York High school, and subsequently from the Law Department of the Columbian university, Washington, D. C.; member of the York County bar, to which he was admitted in 1901; served as postmaster of York, for eight years, a deputy in the auditor general's office at Harrisburg, Pa., and elected auditor general of Pennsylvania in 1920, and state treasurer in 1924.

Although it is true that it can not be said that the people and tongue of Wales will answer for Pennsylvania, yet do I hold that Welsh brains and Welsh honor will continue to have their influence in this state until "religion and piety, truth and justice" shall cease to be a factor in the affairs of this Commonwealth.

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